

esprit orchestra

Alex pauk music director & conductor

1999-2000

17th season



Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts
Friday, March 24, 2000

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esprit orchestra

Alex Pauk, music director & conductor

Friday, March 24th, 2000

Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre

Presented by CBC Radio Two



programme

Into the Distant Stillness... (1984)

Brian Cherney (Canada)

Concertante, Op. 79 (1988)
(for Marimba & 6 percussionists)

Maki Ishii (Japan)

Intermission

Pulau dewata (1977)

Claude Vivier (Canada)

Alap & Gat (1998)

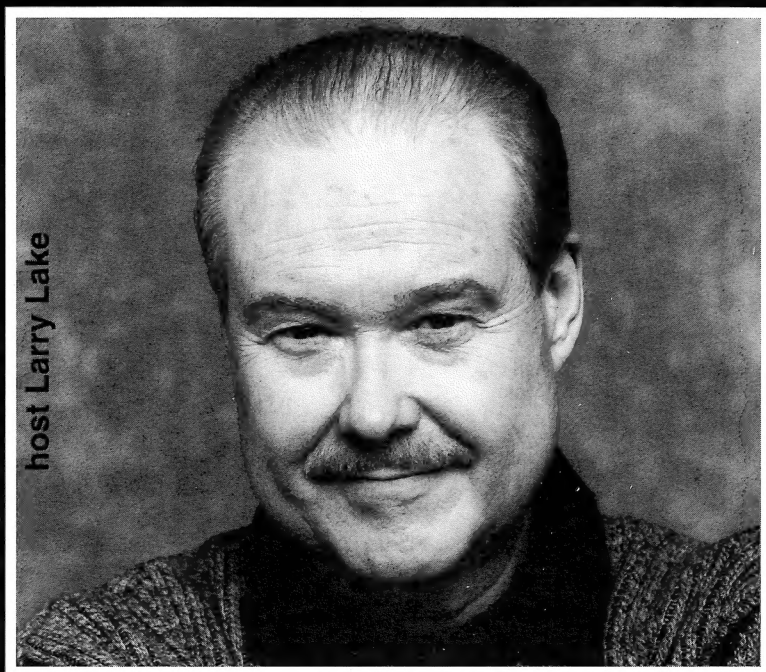
José Evangelista (Canada)

Please note: R. Murray Schafer's *The Palace of the Cinnabar Phoenix*, originally scheduled for performance this evening, has been postponed.

Tonight's concert is being recorded for broadcast on CBC and will air Sunday, April 16th starting at 10:05pm on Two New Hours on CBC Radio Two.

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Brian Cherney *Into the Distant Stillness...*

(1984)

Approximate duration: 18 minutes

Into the Distant Stillness..., written in the spring of 1984, is the third work Cherney has composed bearing the word 'stillness' in its title (the others being *In the Stillness Between*, for large wind and percussion ensemble, and *In the Stillness of the Seventh Autumn*, for solo piano). As the composer tells us, "In the present work I have attempted, in certain sections, to suggest a sense of direction or movement toward something distant. This is to some extent reflected in the seating arrangement of the orchestra: the woodwinds are divided into two quartets, one of which is situated behind the orchestra and therefore more distant from the listener."

There is an axis which one perceives in Cherney's *Into the Distant Stillness...*, a momentum consisting of a series of sonic events which are very distinct in colour and dynamic and yet which seem to flow into each other. These disparate events are linked through a rising and falling motif which is first heard pizzicato on the strings, but which eventually finds its way into all sections of the orchestra. A particularly moving appearance of this motive occurs about half way into the work. Following a layered crescendo in which the entire orchestra creates a seemingly chaotic texture of sound, the motif, played in gently ascending chords, can be heard rising through four octaves on the piano, while the orchestra falls silent. A feeling of buoyancy accompanies this section, as if the entire sound world of the piece is being slowly raised off the ground, taking the listener with it. Following this section, the percussion again initiate a ponderous crescendo reminiscent of the striking use of percussion in such compositions as Penderecki's *St. Luke's Passion*. Unlike Penderecki's use of percussion, however, which often

seems to burst through the texture of the work, Cherney's percussive events orient themselves to a sonic axis. In *Into the Distant Stillness...* one has the experience, not of a growing distance from the soundscape of the piece, but of moving with the work into stillness. The work was written at a time of profound personal sadness for Cherney, as his father was dying. "*Into The Distant Stillness...* had for me the implication of gradually moving toward death."

Maki Ishii *Concertante, Op. 79* (1988)

Approximate duration: 15 minutes

Maki Ishii's music since the early seventies has been concerned with something he refers to as the "third image." This image, perpetually changing shape, impossible to pin down, is like the alchemist's elusive gold. The third image is not something that can be presided over by the ego, since it can belong to neither an Eastern or Western subject, but rather exists somewhere in-between. Ishii has remarked that composition is not the enterprise of the composer. The instruments and the performers are not to be taken as mere means to the composer's ends. Ishii notes that it is often the players who are as much responsible for bringing the third element into view as the composer. The composer's primary job, he feels, remains one of drawing all the various elements of a work into a field of composition in which resonance between

the parts is made possible: unity within diversity. Ishii writes, "one of the aims of this encounter [between East and West, composer and performers, and between the various performers in this work] is to achieve a sense of overall stylistic unity employing two totally independent and heterogeneous sound mediums, that is to say [non-Western] instruments and ensembles and the Western orchestra"

In a commentary to his composition *November Steps* for Japanese instruments and orchestra, Toru Takemitsu wrote that: "It is not part of the composer's metier to be concerned with how to blend the traditional Japanese instruments in as natural as possible a manner with the orchestra. On the contrary, it is necessary to highlight the heterogeneous sound worlds of the *biwa* and *shakuhachi* by setting it in opposition to the orchestra... One should not give the impression of a single musical world being formed."

Ishii's approach is comparable to Takemitsu's in this sense, but the attitudes of the two composers diverge with regard to the notion of unity within diversity. Ishii's interest lies in achieving stylistic unity between these sound worlds and he denies the presence of a dualistic opposition between Eastern and Western musical styles: "it is never my intention to write dualistic works; there is no opposition between the elements in my own mind. If people are unable to perceive this either conceptually or perceptually, this is a shortcoming on my part."

Ishii is fully aware that the openness to the unexpected and the accidental, which are unavoidable characteristics of his methodology, is a double-edged sword; "It is an enormously difficult task to select,

control and manipulate an almost infinite variety of tone colours. In the case of percussion instruments, a composer who writes a piece not based on clearly defined concepts and a rigorous methodology falls into the trap of doing nothing more than creating the conditions for an improvisation. In terms of compositional technique, there are limits to the originality one can expect to obtain from writing within a regular metrical framework, and such writing runs the risk of falling into the realm of the trite and banal. On the other hand, although the variety of indeterminate rhythms available is obviously infinite, there are limits to what the performer can technically play and to what the listener is capable of perceiving."

These kinds of problems are all addressed in tonight's Concertante.

Claude Vivier *Pulau dewata* (1977)

Approximate duration: 12 minutes

Claude Vivier describes *Pulau dewata* as follows: "This piece is a succession of nine melodies of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, and 9 sounds. These modes may be directly reminiscent of Bali, but what I wanted to write was a piece imbued with the spirit of Bali: its dances, its rhythms, and above all, an explosion of life, simple and candid. The ending is the traditional signature of many Balinese pieces, a loving homage to this marvellous people from whom I learned so much."

The simplicity and candidness that Vivier witnessed first hand during a trip to Bali in 1977 is sometimes sighted as the single decisive experience of his creative life. Much earlier, however, Gilles Tremblay recalled his former student, "just

[coming] to me looking at what he wanted to know[...] What made him stand out among many students I had was that he had a truly immense thirst for Knowledge.” Tremblay then goes on to talk about the young Vivier’s fascination with Berg’s opera *Wozzeck*, and the almost unbelievable ease and speed with which he was able to assimilate certain aspects of this work into his own compositions of the time. The point here is that the seemingly fortuitous events that shape an artist’s development appear magically coincidental to all but the one whose intuition guides them to certain experiences and not to others. The intuition that guided Vivier to Asia must be seen as part of a broader journey toward self-understanding: “This voyage to Bali made me realize fully that it was, after all, a voyage to the depths of myself.” Vivier was unabashedly open about the spiritual concerns that underlay much of his mature work. In many interviews, and in the titles Vivier gave to his compositions, themes of faith, humility, death and immortality appear again and again. These questions also permeate many works of those composers identified with the Germanic romantic tradition of Western music. The works of Mahler, Berg and Shostakovich (to name but a few) directly confront, indeed at times fixate on one or more of these themes. What Vivier has in common with these composers is not so much a stylistic sameness, but rather a highly unique musical language. Like these composers, and I think of Berg and Shostakovich in particular, Vivier is able to create almost unbearable dramatic tension with the most pared down of means.

If a work such as *Pulau dewata* (“Island of the Gods”) is simple, it is certainly not sparse, and the succession of nine melodies of 1-9 sounds constitutes a movement from abstraction to an almost palpable physicality of sound, of molecules vibrating in space, coexisting with the temporal movement of the melody. Vivier was fascinated with the almost limitless complexity arising from the simplest

musical gestures. He writes, “even two sounds superimposed...that’s terribly complex. It’s full of things, relationships, resolutions, superimposed spectra...two notes make an interval, OK? and I was able to feel the tensions of the interval. So I was simply able to widen the intervals, make them live and follow like a sequence, a logic that gives the music a breath of life, a very slow breath, very slow. My music is slow in any case, but it has to hold, there has to be a kind of...door on Eternity. What expresses this transcendence? It is the interval between time and the need for eternity.”

José Evangelista *Alap & Gat* (1998)

Approximate duration: 15 minutes

José Evangelista has written, “*Alap* and *Gat* are formal concepts of the classical instrumental music of northern India. *Alap* is a slow and non-pulsed introduction, which progressively reveals the notes of a *raga*. A *Raga* is a complex melodic concept that encompasses the notion of mode and the use of melody. *Gat* is the rhythmic section of a piece that presents a melody, always in the same *raga*. This melody is played many different ways, but always with constant acceleration.

“My work assimilates these formal concepts. In what corresponds to the *raga*, there is, in my work a long melody of more than 80 notes, on which is articulated the melodic and harmonic language of the piece. The first part, *Alap*, is a slow exploration of the melody, from its lowest notes to its highest. The second part, *Gat*, is a rhythmical organization that builds up to a long *accelerando*. The piece concludes with a *coda* which recalls the atmosphere of the beginning.”

- Programme notes by Darrin Heaton

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Alex Pauk, *conductor*

As a conductor and composer, Alex Pauk has been a leading exponent of new music in Canada since his graduation from the University of Toronto in 1971. After graduation, he participated in the Ontario Arts Council Conductor's Workshop for two years before continuing his studies in Europe and Japan.

In the early 1970s, Pauk settled in Vancouver where he was named Vancouver's Musician of the Year in 1975. While there, he helped establish the new music group *Days, Months and Years to Come*, for which he was Music Director and Conductor until 1979. Before moving to Vancouver, he had been instrumental in establishing *ArrayMusic* in Toronto and was its first conductor.

Pauk returned to Toronto again in 1980, founding the Esprit Orchestra three years later. Along with his careful attention to programming, Pauk's work involves a strong role in the development of Esprit's *Toward a Living Art* education and outreach programme.

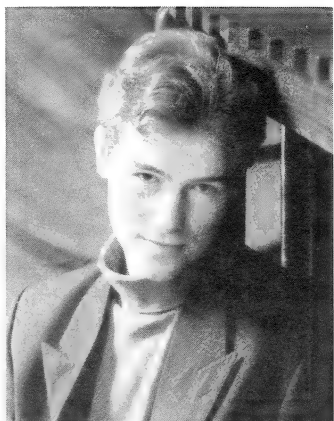
Pauk was Co-chair for the 1984 ISCM World Music Days held in

Toronto and Montréal. In 1986, he was the Music Director and Conductor of the Satori Festival of New Music in Winnipeg and, most recently, he was Music Director for R. Murray Schafer's *Princess of the Stars*, performed at Wildcat Lake in the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve.

As a composer, Pauk has written over thirty-five works and received commissions from the CBC, New Music Concerts, Vancouver New Music Society, Quebec Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, leading Indian dancer and choreographer Menaka Thakkar, harpist Erica Goodman, the Hannaford Street Silver Band and many others.

He has also composed for film, television, radio and music theatre. Pauk's most recent film scores, co-written with Alexina Louie, include the soundtracks for director Don McKellar's film *Last Night* and Jeremy Podeswa's *The Five Senses*.

Recognizing in part nearly two decades of tireless efforts on behalf of new music, his native city recently named Alex Pauk Toronto's Musician of the Year.



Ryan Scott, *marimba*

Ryan Scott received his Master's Degree in Music with honours from the University of Toronto in 1997. He free-lances regularly and has performed with the Toronto Symphony, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra and the Esprit Orchestra. He has also performed with Nexus, the Canadian Electronic Ensemble, the Classical Academy Orchestra, Symphony Canada, Toronto Operetta Theatre and the Scotia Festival Orchestra. He has been broadcast numerous times on CBC national radio and has recently recorded a compact disc with violist Rivka Golani.

Brian Cherney

Brian Cherney was born in Peterborough, Ontario in 1942. His interest in composition began as in childhood when he commuted weekly to study at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto with Margaret Miller Brown and Jacques Abram, and composition

with Sam Dolin. In 1966 and 1969 he attended the International Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, West Germany, where he attended lectures given by György Ligeti, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Mauricio Kagel, among others. He taught theory and composition at the University of Victoria from 1971-2 and began teaching the same subjects at McGill in 1972. His writings include the only major biography of Harry Somers to date.

In his early compositions, Cherney absorbed the techniques of the early Twentieth Century avant-garde; in his String Quartet No. 2, which won the 1970 McMaster Prize for Chamber Music Composition, he was already making confident use of the new string effects of the modern Polish School and the theatrical gestures of Kagel. Theatrical elements continued to play a role in such later works as *Tangents I* for solo cello (1975), *Group Portrait-with piano* (1978), and *Playing for Time* (1981). The dominant characteristic of Cherney's music is a quiet intensity, as suggested by many of his titles. Over the years he has developed a personal style based on a rigorously organized harmonic language and carefully planned temporal proportions. Musical ideas often recur literally or in an altered version from one piece to another. This was already evident in the *Mobile* series of the 1960s, in which similar ideas were presented in different perspectives, varied in time or instrumentation. Many pieces contain direct quotations from or veiled allusions to other, usually tonal music, although these

references are subordinated to Cherney's own evocative and poetic style. In the 1980s the influence of Debussy, whose music shares a similar quiet intensity, became important. Debussy's influence has been evident in Cherney's piano writing, orchestration and general sense of colour.

Cherney's music has been widely performed and broadcast throughout Canada, the USA, South America, Japan, Europe, and Israel. This evening's work, *Into the Distant Stillness...*, won recognition at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. In 1985 Cherney was awarded the Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music for *River of Fire*. Cherney has received commissions from many organizations and individuals, including the Stratford Festival, the CBC, the York Winds, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Eckardt-Gramatte National Competition, the Esprit Orchestra, New Music America, Rivka Golani, Louise-Philippe Pelletier, Lawrence Cherney, John Grew, Joseph Petric and Vivienne Spiteri.

Maki Ishii

Maki Ishii was born on May 28th, 1936 in Tokyo, Japan. After studying composition and conducting from 1952 until 1958 in Tokyo, he moved to Berlin where he continued his studies under Boris Blacher and Josef Rufer. In 1962 he returned to Japan, although he has maintained close ties to Germany. In 1969 he was invited to Berlin by the German Academic Exchange Service to take part in the esteemed "Berliner

Künstlerprogramm." Since that time Ishii has been active in Germany as well as in Japan as both a composer and conductor. His compositions have been performed all over the world, with honorary festivals in his name at the Paris Festival d'Automne in 1978, the Berlin Festwochen in 1981, in Geneva at the Eté Japonais 1983 and Berlin's Insel Music Festival, to name but a few.

Claude Vivier

Claude Vivier was born in Montréal in 1948. He studied composition with Gilles Tremblay at the Montréal Conservatory from 1967 to 1971. His first publicly performed works—a string quartet in two movements and *Ojikawa* for soprano, clarinet and percussion (1968) and *Prolifération* (1969)--attracted the attention of public and critics.

Assisted by a Canada Council grant, Vivier lived in Europe from 1971-4, principally in the Netherlands, where he studied at the Institute for Sound Research in Utrecht with Gottfried Michael Koenig. In Germany, his teachers were Karlheinz Stockhausen and Hans Ulrich Humpert and in France he studied conducting with Paul Mefano, among others. The fruit of these years in Europe were works like as *Musik für das Ende* (1971) and *Disintegration* (1972), which indicated a more solid craft of writing and a rich temperament, while displaying his preoccupation with those themes which would be addressed time and again in the later

works: death, childhood, love and immortality.

The works dating from the period of his return to Montréal in 1974, such as *Chantis* (1973) and *Lettura di Dante* (1974), demonstrate his acquisition of a more flexible writing technique and more assertive musical personality. Interested particularly in writing for the voice, the texts he used were often written in an invented language, in which his spiritual preoccupations could find suitable manifestation. His growing reputation brought him numerous commissions from organizations such as the Festival Singers (*Journal*), the National Youth Philharmonic (*Siddhartha*), the French Ministry of Culture (*Chants*), the NMC (*Zipangu*), the Faculty of Music of the University of Montréal (*Kopernikus*), the CBC Vancouver Orchestra (*Lonely Child*), and the Montréal Symphony Orchestra (*Orion*).

Fascinated by the Music of the Orient, Vivier undertook a long trip to several countries in 1977, principally the island of Bali for a lengthy stay. This trip inspired several works and, on his return, he composed *Pulau dewata*, *Paramirabo*, and *Shiraz*. This visit marked all of his later works. In 1979 Vivier wrote the opera *Kopernikus* to his own libretto, which was premiered at the Monument national in 1980.

That year two of his most successful works were also premiered, *Lonely Child*, for soprano and chamber orchestra, and *Zipangu*, for string orchestra. After composing the CBC commissioned *Wo bist du Licht!*, he returned to Paris in 1982 on

another Canada Council Grant. He had undertaken the composition of a second opera (based on the life of Tchaikovsky) at the time of his tragic murder at age 34. Also left unfinished was a work Vivier prophetically called *Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?*, which had its premiere in Montréal in 1990.

On the subject of Vivier's work, the critic and musicologist Harry Halbreich has written: "His music really resembles no other, and he puts himself right on the fringe of all trends. His music, of a direct and disruptive expression, could bewilder only those hard-hearted people who are unfit to categorize this independent man of genius. Claude Vivier found what so many others have sought for and still seek: the secret of a truly new simplicity."

José Evangelista

José Evangelista distinguished himself as a student at the University of Valencia in computer science, a profession that lies some distance from the music career he would eventually distinguish himself in. Even as a student of science, Evangelista found the time to study harmony, composition and orchestration at the Valencia conservatory with Vicente Asceñcio. After arriving in Canada in 1969, he studied from 1970-3 at the University of Montréal with Andre Prevost, then at McGill from 1976-81 with Bruce Mathar. He also took courses in 1974 and 1984 in contemporary music at Darmstadt. In 1997, Evangelista won the SOCAN Prize.

Pursuing his fascination with the

music of Southeast Asia, Evangelista resided in Java and Bali, Indonesia in the summers of 1976 and 1980, and Burma in the summer of 1986 where he studied the Javanese gamelan and the Burmese piano. He was founding member of the *Evenements du neuf* and also of *Traditions musicales du monde*, a society dedicated to promoting non-Western music. In 1972, Evangelista began teaching at the University of Montréal where in 1987 he began to direct the gamelan workshop. In 1986, he was guest composer at the International Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt.

In 1982 Evangelista was awarded a special prize from Spain's Ministry of Culture for his work *Vision*, and in 1988 won first prize in the choral works competition of St. Mary Magdalene's Church in Toronto for his *O quam suavis est*. He has been a founding member of several concert societies, and has received numerous commissions from, among others, Itineraire (Paris), the Kronos Quartet, the Groupe vocal de France, the SMCQ and the CBC. His works have been performed in Canada, the US, Europe, Asia and Australia by groups such as Ensemble Moderne (Frankfurt), the Nieuw Ensemble (Amsterdam), Music Projects (London), the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, the Montréal Symphony Orchestra, I Musici de Montréal, and the Nouvell Ensemble Moderne (Montréal). Between 1993 and 1995, Evangelista was Composer-In-Residence with the Montréal Symphony Orchestra.

Esprit Orchestra

Canada's only orchestra devoted exclusively to new orchestral music, the Esprit Orchestra was founded in 1983 by Music Director & Conductor Alex Pauk through the generous financial assistance of The Canada Council for the Arts and Suncor Inc.

Comprised of a core of forty-five dedicated musicians with the special skills needed to perform contemporary orchestral music, Esprit presents its annual subscription series of concerts in Toronto. The orchestra is devoted to developing a Canadian musical literature. To this end, it commissions and premieres new works each season, ensures the continued public access to these works through encore performances, radio broadcasts, compact disc and film recordings, and national and international tours. Esprit's concerts are regularly recorded and broadcast on CBC Radio One and Radio Two.

Only in its 17th season, Esprit has already commissioned over 55 new works from 44 different composers, including such internationally-acclaimed Canadians as José Evangelista, John Rea, R. Murray Schafer and Harry Somers. Moreover, works commissioned by NEXUS, CBC Radio, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (among others) have been premiered by Esprit.

Another facet of Esprit's mission is a commitment to setting new Canadian music within an international context. The orchestra has introduced Canadian audiences

to major works by such contemporary masters as Takemitsu, Ligeti, Berio, Adams, Schnittke and Penderecki.

Maestro Pauk and the orchestra have also collaborated with leading soloists and ensembles including Jean Stilwell, Maureen Forrester, Rivka Golani, Desmond Hoebig, Richard Margison, Jon Kimura Parker, André Laplante, Robert Aitken and NEXUS.

In September of 1999, Esprit completed its triumphant debut European tour. With four concerts in Amsterdam at the invitation of the International Gaudeamus Music Week and another in Paris, the tour represented one of the largest-ever presentations of Canadian orchestral music in Europe. Over 90% of the repertoire was Canadian and compatriots Robert Aitken and Erica Goodman were the orchestra's chosen soloists. The previous year, Esprit also toured Western Canada, presenting concerts and educational activities to rave reviews.

The Esprit Orchestra's excellence and commitment to the future of our culture has not gone unnoticed: In 1990, SOCAN's Award of Merit, recognizing imaginative programming of contemporary music over several seasons was presented to the orchestra; in 1995, Esprit was awarded the Jean A. Chalmers National Music Award for outstanding contribution to musical creativity; the orchestra was awarded its first Lieutenant Governor's Award for the Arts for success in developing private sector and community support in 1996, its second in 1998; and, the same year, Esprit was one of twenty-three recipients of a special "million-dollar birthday gift" celebrating Joan Chalmers' seventieth birthday.

The orchestra expanded its activities in 1988 to include an education and audience development programme, *Toward a Living Art*, that has involved hundreds of students in workshops, rehearsals and concerts with Maestro Pauk, orchestra musicians, leading soloists and composers, and other professionals from the music industry.

November 1996 saw Esprit's *Toward a Living Art Festival*—a week-long open-house where students and the general public could meet composers from around Canada—feature open rehearsals, workshops, artists' talks, film screenings and concerts. The next year, Esprit initiated its *Student Audience Programme*, and provided 500 high school students with free tickets to its concerts.

The orchestra has also appeared in several Rhombus Media films, among them *Ravel*; *September Songs: The Music of Kurt Weill*; *The Eternal Earth*, about Canadian composer Alexina Louie; *Last Night*, the award-winning film by Don McKellar; and most recently Jeremy Podeswa's *The Five Senses*.

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Acknowledgements

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Don't Miss Esprit Orchestra's Next Concert

Esprit Snapshot 2000

Wednesday, May 31st, 2000

8pm (7pm pre-concert chat)

André Laplante, *piano*

Barbara Hannigan, *soprano*

Jacques Hétu (Canada)

Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 64 (1999) world premiere

Ron Ford (The Netherlands)

Londonsong (1997) Canadian premiere

John Rea (Canada)

Vanishing Points (1983)

Ana Sokolovic (Canada)

Nine Proverbs (2000) world premiere

This concert captures the essence of Esprit's mandate which centres on discovering young composers, promoting Canada's most accomplished composers, guarding our musical heritage by ensuring senior composers are not forgotten and placing Canadian music in an international context. Repeat performances of previously commissioned works are integral to our programming. As part of the MusicCanadaMusique 2000 celebrations, the programme includes an encore performance of the first piece ever commissioned by Esprit (Rea) together with two of our most recent commissions (Sokolovic & Hétu). Through the music of Hétu, Rea and Sokolovic, three generations of Canadian composers are represented. Ron Ford's piece adds the international accent and extends Esprit's link with the contemporary music scene in The Netherlands.

Call 416.366.7723 or 1.800.708.6754

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Latecomers will not be admitted until a suitable break in the performance or intermission. This is done at the discretion of House Management. The use of photographic equipment, personal stereos or recording devices is strictly prohibited by law in this theatre. Please check them with House Management. The St. Lawrence Centre does not accept responsibility for lost or stolen articles.

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